

Cambridge terraced house with grand interiors set to open doors

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Kitchen wall design in David Parr House David Parr House

David Parr House, a unique time-capsule of Victorian working-class art and life, is set for major restoration thanks to a £625,300 grant made possible by National Lottery players.

David Parr House, 186 Gwydir Street, and its remarkable William Morris-inspired hand-painted interiors will be repaired and opened to the public. A small visitor space will be built, and exciting outreach and learning events and collaborations will allow a wide range of people to enjoy the David Parr experience.

[quote= Tamsin Wimhurst, Chair of the David Parr House CIO] "David Parr House is a unique showcase for the life and art of the ordinary working people who created this beautiful city." [/quote]

Who was David Parr?

David Parr was a skilled 'artist-painter' who worked for the Cambridge decorative arts firm F. R. Leach from 1872. Over 40 years, he decorated his own modest home in the style of the grand interiors of the Victorian Gothic and Arts and Crafts colleges, churches and houses he worked on every day. After his death in 1927, his grand-daughter Elsie, aged 12, came to live in the house

and stayed there for the next 85 years. Her reverence for her grandfather's work and the survival of her family artefacts has created a 20th-century time-capsule that tells remarkable stories of how ordinary people lived in Cambridge.

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of HLF East of England, said: "Unassuming from the outside, David Parr House offers a unique insight into the life of David Parr and his incredible work which has been cared for by his granddaughter for decades – the house is truly a hidden heritage gem! Thanks to National Lottery players, we're delighted to support plans to restore the house and open up its treasures for even more people to enjoy."

The Life and Art in a Worker's House project

As well as vital restoration and conservation work, the project will enable people of all ages to enjoy the house and the stories it has to tell. Volunteers will be recruited and trained to work as tour guides and collect oral histories from the local community. The project will also make research into Leach work publically available on the website for the first time.

Tamsin Wimhurst, Chair of the David Parr House CIO, said: "We are delighted and deeply grateful to have received HLF support for the 'Life and Art in a Worker's House' project. Cambridge is globally renowned for its grand, high-culture interiors; by contrast the David Parr House is a unique showcase for the life and art of the ordinary working people who created this beautiful city.

"Likewise, the success of this application is due to the generosity, interest and input of many in the local community – I would like to thank them all as we move into this exciting new phase. As William Morris so perfectly said, 'The past is not dead, it is living in us, and will be alive in the future which we are now helping to make.'"

Work is planned to start in April this year and be complete by autumn 2019.